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LISA M. RIHA  
Secretary

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To: Baltimore Sun Editorial Board

Thank you for taking the time to adequately represent the current condition of the morale among the very frustrated men and women of the Baltimore Police Department. We aren't often the recipients of such support from your Editorial Team. In fact, it appears that you are more apt to accept the safe cover of those people and groups who hold power, rather than speak truth to reality. In some ways it is easy to understand your position as you are merely spectators to a condition that is about life and death to the rest of us. When you and your colleagues have spent long hot summers patrolling the streets of East and West Baltimore, with no idea how many dead and injured will be counted on your shift, then we can talk about your positions on how best to do our jobs.

Our members are challenged, on a daily basis, with our desire to serve the citizens of Baltimore and the all too obvious fact that the implementation of the Consent Decree has taken a front seat to the actual fight against crime. All of the meetings, hearings, and focus groups in the world will not get Baltimore to a safe place, anytime soon. The Consent Decree and its implementation has become the singular focus of our leadership and, all the while, the body count grows uninhibited. This dynamic would frustrate and concern any professional law enforcement officer. The attention has been diverted from what needs to be done to what will eventually be done, somewhere down a very long road. There is no talk of a realistic plan to solve the issues with recruitment and retention; a serious problem in an agency that is at least 500 people below recommended staffing levels. Nothing has been done to address the untenable condition of our work facilities; just one more problem that will not help to attract the best candidates to the BPD. In the meantime, our children and seniors are forced to remain inside in order to avoid becoming statistics. Visitors and tourists are balking at spending their time and money in Baltimore. And, to add insult to injury, we are on every list that includes those cities where you'd probably rather not live.

Our members are committed to the fight against crime here in Baltimore. We would love nothing more than to be able to say that we have the "bad guys" on the run or, even better, under control. Unfortunately, we are unable to say that now and with every day that the singular focus is on the Consent Decree we get further and further away from a safe future for

Baltimore. At some point, it is important for those in power to realize that people are more important than policies, that our brave men and women in the BPD are enemies of the criminal element only, and that time is of the essence. How many more citizens will be sacrificed for the very slow and potentially unproductive Consent Decree execution? And, how many more editorials will you write that speak so little truth? I offer the record of Commissioner Ed Norris' leadership as an example. In your editorial, you state that he came to town with "an ill-fated plan for New York-style policing". As our members remember it, Commissioner Norris did, in fact, bring a New York style of policing but it was hardly ill-fated. During his tenure, Baltimore led the nation in crime decline every year. Homicides fell to 253 after averaging 320 per year in the 1990's. Police involved shootings and civilian complaints were also reduced, just to name a few examples. If those successes are part of an ill-fated plan, I don't understand your standards. An ill-fated plan, in actuality, looks like a city focused on the implementation of a Court Order that may, or may not, improve the crime numbers in Baltimore rather than on doing what is required to protect the citizens today.

Sincerely,

Mike Mancuso